DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 462 665 CG 031 610

AUTHOR Laes, Timo; Laes, Tuula
TITLE Career Burnout and Its Relationship to Couple Burnout in Finland.
PUB DATE 2001-08-00
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (109th, San Francisco, CA, August 24-28, 2001).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Burnout; Comparative Analysis; Cross Cultural Studies; Elementary School Teachers; Emotional Response; Employed Women; *Family Work Relationship; Foreign Countries; Helplessness; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Job Satisfaction; Marriage; Pilot Projects; *Sex Differences; Sleep
IDENTIFIERS England; Finland (Helsinki); Hopelessness; Israel; Portugal; Spain; United States

ABSTRACT

This study is part of cross cultural research on the relationship between career and couple burnout in six countries (England, Finland, Israel, Portugal, Spain, and the USA.) This pilot study presents first results of Finnish data. Female elementary school teachers (N=56) and male students (N=70) in academic professional education completed the Couple Burnout Measure (CBM). Finnish females reported significantly higher means in both career and couple burnout than males, although all means were lower than in a combined group of American men and women. There were positive correlations between indicators of career and couple relationship stress. In the whole group there were correlations between age and feelings of helplessness and sleeping difficulties in connection to work. Negative correlations were seen in the male group between age and feelings of work related feelings of helplessness, depression, and weakness. In the female group, negative correlations exist between age and feelings of hopelessness. A slight negative correlation was noted between length of career and feelings of hopelessness in the total group. The study recommends continuing to study burnout in a larger scale with versatile measures, especially as burnout is believed to be on the increase. (Contains 5 tables and 21 references.) (Author/JDM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 462 665

Career Burnout and Its Relationship to Couple Burnout in Finland

by

Timo Laes
Tuula Laes

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
T. LAES
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CG031610

Career Burnout and Its Relationship to Couple Burnout in Finland.

Timo Laes & Tuula Laes
University of Turku, Department of Teacher Education in Rauma, Finland
timo.laes@utu.fi & tuula.laes@utu.fi

Introduction

This study is a part of a cross cultural research on the relationship between career and couple burnout in six countries: England, Finland, Israel, Portugal, Spain and USA. The project is led by professor Ayala M. Pines, Ben-Gurion University, Israel. This pilot study presents first results on Finnish data.

The paper has been presented in a symposium entitled "The Relationship between Career and Couple Burnout: A Cross-Cultural Perspective" held at the Annual Convention of The American Psychological Association, San Francisco, California, 25.8.2001.

Prevalence of stress in work and family

During the last decades there has been a great deal of research on increased emotional, physical and mental pressure in people´s life, the phenomena that are called stress and, in its extreme form: burnout. One of the latest projects on this issue is the so called OPEPRO-project by the Finnish National Board of Education. The results indicated that teachers are working under conditions of high stress. They showed also that more and more teachers are making applications for early pension. Yet, teaching at elementary school is still seen as an attractive profession, but the popularity of teaching at the higher levels of comprehensive school seems to be declining and consequently the number of applicants to subject teacher programs is declining (Luukkainen 2000).

Kinnunen (1985, 1989, 1993) conducted a longitudinal study examining relationships between teachers' work, stress, and health using self-reports and some objective physiological measures. The data was gathered between years1983 and 1991. The teachers estimated their level of stress having rised during that period. Students'attitudes and increasing level of workload were named as the main sources of stress. The most common coping strategies that teachers used

were problem-resolving, hobbies, social support and reflecting by oneself. Feelings of stress were intensifying when approaching the year 1991, but selectively. Teachers feeling themselves powerful in 1983 were in most cases feeling themselves powerful also in 1991, and stressed-out teachers likewise. In a comparison between professions Sinivuo (1990) found military personnel having less symptoms of stress than teachers. He suggested succesful personnel selection and a lifestyle with more physical exercise as explanations for the lower level of stress in army staff.

Teachers estimated the atmosphere in their families more positively in the year 1991 than 1983. Kinnunen explains the result with the change of family situation: in the majority of the families the children had grown up and moved out from home. Consequently teachers had less difficulties in adjusting between work and family life.

In general, there seems to be a high commitment to family-life in Finland. Kinnunen (2000) found 77-81 % of the females and 74-75% of the males identifying themselves strongly with families and finding family the most satisfying sphere of life. This situation continued in male population even when children grew up and left home. Commitment to work is on a much lower level in Finland: only 16-21 % of females and 22-26% reported work as their prime source of satisfaction in life. Work is experienced to disturb familylife more often than vice versa, e.g. "Because of my work I must be absent from my family circles more than I would like to" and "The work is preventing me from my duties and tasks at home". (Kauppinen-Toropainen & Kandolin 1991, Kinnunen 1999, 2000) On higher professional levels commitment to work seemed to be somewhat higher. Commitment had connections with the age of children: women tended to become more involved with work when the children grew up.(Kinnunen 1999, 2000)

There is a common belief about the positive effect couple-relationship on one´s health: it is believed that being married outstands living single or divorced. However, Finnish studies by Sinivuo (1990) and Karisto (1984) did not confirm this conception. Their results indicate that being married is not alone a health protecting factor in either males or females.

Hypotheses on stress in life

In his classical study Wilensky (1960) put forward hypothesis concerning relations between experiences in work and other areas of life. He suggested three potential explanations called spillover, compensation and segmentation hypotheses:

1. The spillover hypotheses suggests that experiences in working life generalize to other areas in life and vice versa. This can be seen as positive correlations between job satisfaction and satisfaction with life in general.

2. According to the second hypothesis, spare time activities compensate experiences in work. A person can compensate difficulties and misfortune in work with satisfactory experiences in hobbies.

3. The segmentation hypothesis suggests that working life and spare time are separate walks of life. They are proposed to be separate phenomena without any interaction or connections between each other.

Most studies (Chacko 1983, Lance & Richardson 1988, Matsuda 1983, Near & al1983, Near & al 1984) support the spillover hypothesis. However, Lance & Richardson (1988) pointed out that results in different studies are not fully comparable because the hypotheses mentioned have been defined in contradictory ways. That is why inferences drawn from earlier studies are problematic and not necessarily convincing.

Pearlin and Schooler (1978) found that interventions aiming at coping with stress were most effective when the problems were within close interpersonal role areas, e.g. marriage and child rearing. Problems at work were found to be resistant to amelioration through intervention efforts. Problems were seen as impersonal, and reflecting the chronic nature of problems in the whole working contexts.

Eventhough research on stress abounds, no studies on the relationship between career burnout and couple burnout have been conducted in Finland. This is a pilot study in a most interesting topic.

Finnish pilot study

Stress and burnout are threats to healthy functioning and leading a happy life which are both natural wishes in people. That makes them a permanent target in psychological research in preventive sense. As a phenomenon stress can be addressed from many angles: earlier research indicates that it has connections both to individual and cultural factors. Stress seems to be a function of many things including sex, age, social class, social status, personality, lifestyle. In all, it is a very complicated fabric and the scientific methods aiming at addressing it remain most often only robust endeavours.

In this study relations to spouse and work are compared in the light of expressed indicators of stress and burnout. What kind of consumption can we make about stress and burnout in Finnish culture? Is it prevailing solely in relation to work or couple relationship or is it a more general phenomenon in a person´s mind attaching to both? Describing oneself is communication and it has connections both to linguistic factors and cultural factors. In cultures there are codes concerning proper behavior including verbal expression. There are things that can be said and others that cannot be. In many cultures there are vernacular proverbs passing from generation to another and telling how to behave.

Earlier Finnish research suggests differences between females and males when expressing stressed-outness.is concerned. Participating a cross-cultural research gives possibilities to make comparisons between people living in different parts of the world. There are certainly things uniting people and others making them behave differently.

The authors of this article find the Finnish people a monolithic nation as to language, religion and race. The rate of literacy is near 100 % and communication by media or vehicles is efficient which add to unanimousness. Females have a good status in both everyday and working lives, one indication of this is a female president. The Finnish language is totally different from that of neighbouring countries. National character is described as calm and silent. This is how the Finnish angle adds to this cross-cultural study on burnout, led by professor Ayala M. Pines, Israel.

Method

Participants and procedure

The subjects in this study are 56 female kindergarten or elementary school teachers participating a supplementary course in the Teacher Education Department in Rauma, Turku University. The male group comprises 70 students in academic professional education, in Helsinki. All the subjects were either married or had been living together with a partner for a longer time.

The Finnish version of the Couple Burnout Measure, CBM, (Pines 1996) was used. It is a self-report measure with altogether twenty items concerning both career and couple relationship. CBM is an adaptation of Burnout Measure (BM) by (Pines & Aronson 1988). BM has been estimated to have a high degree of validity and reliability in several studies. CBM has been

evaluated to have internal consistency variables between .84 and .90 (Pines 2001, unpublished). The subjects filled formulas anonymously during class. Information concerning age, length of career and couple relationship was added on the sheet. The data was gathered in 2001.

Table 1. Age, length of career, and length of couple relationship in years in Finnish male (n=70) and female groups (n=58)

	Males		Females	
	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd
Age	32.0	1.3	37.1	6.2
Career	9.1	2.1	10.3	7.4
Couple relationship	4.7	3.2	11.9	7.1

Table 1 shows some basic data describing the subjects of the study. The female group with their mean of 37 years are five years older than males who are in a close age interval round 32 years. Females report longer couple relationships than males, but lengths of working careers are nearly the same: 10 years for females and 9 years for males. In all, the male group is more homogenous as to age, length of career and couple relationship. Standard deviations show larger within-group differences in the female group in all variables mentioned.

Results and discussion

Table 2 illuminates the career and couple-burnout measures in both groups. All the means are at the low end of the scales, ranging: 1-7 points. The total burnout measure for the Finnish group is 2.3 (Sd = .66). Finnish females report significantly higher means in both career and couple burnout than males. Yet, all the means are lower than in a combined group of American men and women, 3.3. (Pines 1996)

Table 2. Career and Couple Burnout in Finnish male (n=70) and female (n=58) groups

	Male		Female		All	
	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd
Career burnout	2.4	1.2	2.8*	1.2	2.6	.74
Couple burnout	1.8	1.1	2.2*	1.2.	2.0	.85

The Pearson correlation coefficients between career burnout and couple burnout were counted in all groups. There are positive correlations in the male group (r=.36), in the female group (r=.31) and in the whole group (r=.38). In the female group the significance level is slightly lower (p<. 05) than in the whole group or in the male group (p< .01).

Table 3. Correlations between means of Career and Couple Burnout measures

Male	Female	All
.36*	.31*	.38*

When examining the results all the possible biases in self-reporting must be taken into account. There may be individual response styles, habitual ways of answering questions. There may also be some reactivity, responses being more desirable or overstated because of the testing situation. The data was gathered during class: the females were having a course in human relations but the males had been informed about a sports competition immediately after the testing. The situational factors were different and the may have had a special effect on mood in subjects. Tendency to being consistent in answering is also a phenomenon recognized to be present in self evaluations. Thinking intuitively, this might have been affecting especially the male group. Males are often supposed to have an easy access to the so-called male discourse with its own cultural characteristics.

On the other hand, inconsistencies in self evaluation are known to be higher when one´s emotional characteristics are concerned. (Hampson 1995). The very nature of self-reports involves biases which are partly common to all western thinking (Church 2000: Hampson 1995) and impossible to eliminate. The same problem prevails in other samples of this cross cultural study also.

Both groups of subjects consisted of selected persons. The teachers had been chosen to their professional education by university entrance examinations which included an interview. The male group had gone through a more thorough psychological examination aiming at finding the healthiest and the psychologically most enduring persons among the applicants. This means that the samples are not representative of the Finnish people, yet they represent Finnish culture. So far there can be seen positive correlations between indicators of career and couple relationship stress. It might give some reinforcement to the spillover hypothesis. But is there something else that is worthy of note?

Because of using a measure with a Likert scale, it is somewhat arbitrary to count correlations between single variables. Anyhow the procedures were done in the hope of shedding some extra light on possible relationships.

The following tables show correlations between age, length of career and length of couple-relationships in years. Variables with significant correlations in any of three groupings are included in the table.

Table 3. Significant correlations between *age* and burnout variables

Variable	All (n=126)	Male (n=70)	Female (n=58)
CaHelpless	.33***	-.25**	
CaHopeless			-.26**
CaDepressed		-.27**	
CaWeak		-.36***	
CaSleepdif	.24**		
Cal´vehadit			-.24**
CoDisapp	.27**		
CoWeak	.20*		

In the whole group there were correlations between age and feelings of helplessness and sleeping difficulties in connection to work. When thinking about couple relationship there were connections between age and feelings of disappointment and helplessness. However, when examining two groups separately, one can see negative correlations in the male group between age and feelings of work related feelings of helplessness, depression and weakness. In the female group negative correlations exist between age and feelings of hopelessness and " I´ve had it" when the career is concerned. Neither male nor female choices show any correlation between age and stress variables in couple relationship. The table shows that treating sexes together, as one group means losing a lot of information. When the effect of sex is separated the figures look different. Yet, in both groups an older age seems to be connected with lesser stress indices at work.

Table 4. Significant correlations between *length of career* and burnout variables

Variable	All (n=126)	Male (n=70)	Female (n=58)
CaDisapp			-.32***
CaHopeless	-.20*		-.30***
CaTrapped			-.25**
Cal´vehadit			-.24**
CoI'vehadit		.21*	

Table 4 shows the slight negative correlation between length of career and feelings of hopelessness in the total group. The male group show some correlation between the length of career and feelings of burnout in couple relationship, on the variable "I´ve had it". Instead, females show negative correlations between career length and variables of disappointment, hopelessness, trapped and " I´ve had it". With longer experience at work females seem to feel less stressed-out. Their lengths of career varied more in the female group and this might give explanation to significant differences in their group only.

Table 5. Significant correlations between *length of couple-relationship* and burnout variables

Variable	All (n=126)	Male (n=70)	Female (n=58)
CaTired			-.24**
CaDisapp			-.30***
CaHopeless			-.46***
CaTrapped			-.21*
CaDepressed			-.26**
CaHelpless	.31***		
CaInsecure	.18*		
Cal'vehadit	- .30***		-.36***
CoTiredness		.18*	
CoHopeless		.18*	
CoDisapp	. 21**		
CoHelpless		.28**	
CoDepressed		.22*	
CoWeak	.28**	.22*	
CoInsecure	. 22**	.27***	

Table 5 illuminates correlations in the whole group. As to career, there is a positive correlation between length of couple relationship and variables of helplessness and insecurity. In addition there is a strong negative correlation with the variable "I´ve had it".When looking at variables

concerning couple relationship there can be seen positive correlations between time and disappointment, weakness and insecurity.

In the male group the length of couple relationship does not correlate with career stress variables. The duration of couple relationships were relatively short, in thinking solely from the time perspective they were in the beginning of their career path. Instead, in the female group there are altogether six negative correlations between duration of couple relationship and stress variables concerning the career: tiredness, disappointment, hopelessness, trapped, depressed and "I´ve had it". The time elapsed at work is much longer than in the male group and gives more space to maturational processes.

Instead, there are several positive correlations in the male group between length of couple relationship and several variables of stress: tiredness, hopelessness, helplessness, depression, weakness and insecurity. In the female group the situation was totally different: there are no correlations between length of couple relationship and variables of stress. The result is not surprising: the females had notably longer couple relationships and earlier Finnish research indicates that even when unemployed women tend to become more satisfied with quality of their couple relationship with time (Kinnunen 2001).

Conclusions

This pilot study using Finnish subjects gives some evidence on the spillover effect of stress to both career and couple relationship. Research procedures have some weaknesses as to the selectiveness of subjects who are all adult academic students with a history of being estimated as having good capacities to interpersonal relationships. It is advisable to continue studying burnout in a larger scale with versatile measures, especially in circumstances today where stress and burnout are believed to be on increase.

References

Chacko, T.I. (1983) Research notes. Job and life satisfactions: A causal analysis of their relationships. Academy of Management Journal, 26 (1), 163-169.

Church, T. 2000. Culture and Personality: Towards an Integrated Cultural Trait Psychology. Journal of Personality 68:4, 651-703.

Hampson, S. 1995. The Construction of Personality. In S.E. Hampson & A.M .Colman (Eds.) Individual Differences and Personality. New York: Longman, 20-39.

Karisto, A. 1984. Hyvinvointi ja sairauden ongelma: Suomea ja muita Pohjoismaita vertaileva tutkimus sairastuvuuden väestöryhmittäisistä eroista ja sairaudesta hyvinvoinnin vajeena. Kansaneläkelaitoksen julkaisuja M:46. Helsinki:Kansaneläkelaitos. (Wellbeing and sickness: ethnographic study on differences in health and sickness in Finland and other Nordic countries).

Keskinen, S. (1990). Päiväkotihenkilöstön sisäiset mallit ja työtyytyväisyys.Turun yliopiston julkaisuja, 80. (Connection between internal models and working satisfaction, stress at work and occupational identity in day care personnel. Publications from the University of Turku 80. English summary.)

Kinnunen, U., Mäkinen, R. & Vihko, V. (1985). Opettajan työstressin ympärivuotinen vaihtelu.Jyväskylän yliopisto. Kasvatustieteiden tutkimuslaitoksen julkaisuja.363. (The level of teacher stress over a school year. Reports from the institute for Educational Research, 363. University of Jyväskylä. In Finnish)

Kinnunen U. (1989) Teacher stress over a school year. University of Jyväskylä. Jyväskylä studies in education, psychology and social research, 70.

Kinnunen, U. & Parkatti, T. (1993) Ikääntyvä opettaja - kuormittuneisuus ja terveys työssä. Helsinki : Työterveyslaitos. (A teacher growing old - workload and health. Helsinki: Finnish Institute of Occupational Health)

Kinnunen, U., Loikkanen, E. & Mauno, S. (1995). Työn ja perheen vuorovaikutus: ongelmien yleisyys, syyt ja seuraukset. Jyväskylän yliopiston perhetutkimusyksikön julkaisuja 5.(Work-family interaction: prevalence, antecedents and consequences of problems.University of Jyväskylä. Reports from the Family Research Unit, 5. In Finnish).

Kinnunen, U., Nätti, J., Happonen, M., Kalliolahti, M. Kelhälä, A. and Mauno, S. (2000) Kokemuksia työstä ja perheestä laman jälkeisessä Suomessa. Jyväskylän yliopiston perhetutkimusyksikön julkaisuja 12. (Experiences of work and family life in Finland after the economic recession of the early 1990's. Reports from the Family Research Unit, 12. University of Jyväskylä. (In Finnish).

Kauppinen-Toropainen, K. & Kandolin, I. (1991). Työn ja kodin vaatimusten yhdistäminen. Työ ja Ihminen, 5, 295-312. (Compromising between demands of work and home-life.In Finnish)

Lance, C.E. & Richardson, D.R. (1988) Correlates of work and nonwork stress and satisfaction among American insulated sojourners. Human relations, 41 (10), 725-738.

Luukkainen, O. 2000. Opettaja vuonna 2010. Opettajien perus- ja täydennyskoulutuksen ennakointihankkeen (OPEPRO) raportti 15. Loppuraportti. Opetushallitus.(Teacher in 2010. OPEPRO, a report from the National Board of Education 15. In Finnish)

Matsuda, N. (1983) A cognitive model for life and work-related satisfaction: Evidence from confirmatory latent structure analysis. Japanese Psychological Research, 25 (3), 130-139.

Near, J.P., Smith, C.A., Rice, R.W. & Hunt, R.G. (1983) Job satisfaction and nonwork satisfaction as components of life satisfaction. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 13, 126-144.

Near, J.P., Smith, C.A., Rice, R.W. & Hunt, R.G. (1984) A Comparison of work and nonwork predictors of life satisfaction. Academy of Management Journal, 27 (1), 184-190.

Pearlin, L.I. & Schooler, C. (1978) The structure of coping. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 19, 2-21.

Pines, A.M. & Aronson, E. (1988). Career Burnout. New York: Free Press.

Sallinen, M. & Kinnunen, U., (2001). Taloudellinen stressi ja perheen hyvinvointi: yhteyksiä välittävät mekanismit. Psykologia 36 (4), 245-256. (Economic stress and family welfare: the linking mechanisms. In Finnish)

Sinivuo, J. 1990. Kuormitus ja voimavarat upseerin uralla. Jyväskylä Studies in Education, Psychology and Social Research 75. (Stress and resources in military career. In Finnish.)

Wilensky, H. (1960) Work, Careers and social integration. International Social Science Journal, 12, 543-560.